



## **Safeguarding Records Policy**

**Pre-school Manager: Nicky Benson-Dare**

**This policy will be reviewed annually. It will also be revised following any concerns and/or updates to national and local guidance and procedures.**

## Statement

Promoting the welfare of and safeguarding children is of paramount importance to St. Peter's Busy Bees Pre-school. Ensuring all staff know when and how to record concerns for a child's welfare, however small or apparently insignificant is an essential part of the early years designated person (designated safeguarding lead) position.

Good record-keeping is an important part of the setting's accountability to children and their families and will assist the DSL in meeting their key responsibility to respond appropriately to welfare concerns for children. Records should be factually accurate, relevant, up to date and auditable. They should support monitoring, risk-assessment and planning for children and enable informed and timely referrals to be made when necessary.

St. Peter's Busy Bees have a statutory duty to promote the well-being and safety of every child who attends the setting. This is a whole setting task. Children may show or tell us that something is wrong in a variety of ways. All staff have an important role to play in helping to identify welfare concerns for children and possible indicators of abuse or neglect at an early stage. For some children a "one off" serious incident or concern will come to your attention and you will have no doubt that you must immediately record and report this. Most often however it is the accumulation of a number of small incidents, events or observations - "the jigsaw" - that provides the evidence that a child is being harmed. It is vital therefore that any concern you have for a child's welfare, however small, is recorded and passed to the designated safeguarding lead.

## Procedures

Standard recording process:

- Safeguarding training and awareness will form part of staff meetings and supervision sessions. These meetings will provide an opportunity to remind staff of their safeguarding responsibilities and the expectations on them to report and record concerns.
- These meetings will be a useful forum for clarifying what the role as the setting EYDP would view as an incident concern and the importance of keeping records of any safeguarding concerns.
- Staff are guided in recording to be mindful of the possibility that this may be shared with others at some stage and in exceptional cases, the possibility that records may become evidence in court proceedings.

Incident and concerns:

- Concerns may arise in one or more of the following areas:
  - The child's behaviour
  - The child has a physical injury
  - The child makes a disclosure or allegation
  - The child's physical presentation

- Information from or observation/behavior of a parent
- When completing the Safeguarding Incident/Concern form staff will ensure:
  - This is dated, signed and all details are legible
  - The incident/event/observation of concern is described clearly and concisely
  - This is written using straightforward language and fact and opinion are differentiated
  - If recording a disclosure, the child's own words are recorded and any questions that have been asked of the child are included
  - Physical marks and injuries are recorded on a body map where appropriate
  - Any action that has been taken is recorded
- When an Incident/Concern form is passed to/completed by the designated safeguarding lead, it is important that it is sufficiently detailed and has been dated and signed by the staff member who has reported the concern. If a body map has been completed, or there are any other documents referred to in the record, ensure these are attached and where appropriate are also dated and signed. It is important to make a record of the action taken in response to every welfare concern form passed to the designated safeguarding lead.
- The level of detail in this record will clearly depend on the nature and seriousness of the concern but may include requests for staff to monitor specific aspects of the child's presentation, behaviour and attendance.
- It is important that the person who has the concern gives a first hand account of this so that there is a clear and accurate record of what has been seen or heard. A record written by the staff member will ensure that there is no misinterpretation of the concern or that it cannot be overlooked or forgotten. The setting's Incident/Concern form can be found in the safeguarding form folder. If you are in any doubt ask the setting's designated safeguarding lead.

After completion of the Incident/Concern Form:

- One of the main purposes of recording is to make sure that the setting's designated safeguarding lead is able to respond properly to concerns about children. The DSL will decide what action is necessary in response to any concern. The actions they take will depend on how serious and urgent the concern is. These actions can range from a decision to keep a close eye on the child to referring the child to Children's Social Services so that they can undertake an assessment of the child's safety. The completed concern form will be kept by the DSL in a confidential file.

Information sharing:

- Information relating to children's welfare will be shared on a strict "need to know" basis and in line with Kent's Safeguarding Children Board's Safeguarding Children Procedure that we have a duty to work within.

- Neither the parent/carer nor the child has an automatic right of access to child protection records and in most cases the actual record will not be shared with parents/carers. However staff should write their report in a way that, if asked to release setting records, by a Court for example, the record is a fair and factual account of an incident or event. One of the most common responses by the designated safeguarding lead to concerns raised by staff for children will be to share these with parents with the purpose of working with them to understand and address the issue of concern. The details of staff records therefore may be presented verbally to parents/carers. If the designated safeguarding lead is worried that talking to parents might create a risk to any staff member's safety they will not do this but seek the advice of colleagues in Education and Specialist Children's Services.
- Concerns for children and what happens in response to these can be very important information for staff who may have concerns for the child at a later time. The DfE provide guidance on the retention and transfer of safeguarding records. The designated safeguarding lead is responsible for passing these on under confidential cover to the designated person in the child's new school/setting when the child leaves.

When and how to start safeguarding records:

- Once an Incident/Concern form has been completed and passed to the DSL, the documents will be stored in a separate safeguarding filing system regardless of whether formal child protection procedures have been initiated. For some children this single record will be the only concern held for them over their time in the setting. For others, further information will be added in, often from a variety of sources, over time.
- The DSL will store single or infrequent records of concerns or home injuries in an alphabetically divided ring binder file.
- A stand-alone individual file for a child will be started when:
  - Concerns for the child and consequently records of these concerns and subsequent actions are increasing
  - The child has been referred to Specialist Children's Services
  - The DSL has been made aware of the involvement of Specialist Children's Services with the child/family and is contributing to multi-agency assessments
  - Where concerns relate to more than one child from the same family at the setting, a separate file for each child will be created. Common records e.g. child protection conference minutes will be duplicated for each file where appropriate
  - When an individual file is started a Safeguarding Front sheet is completed to enable key information to be easily accessed
  - The child's records in the administration folder are marked by a coloured sticker to indicate the presence of a separate confidential file

What records should be kept in a child's safeguarding file?

- All setting Incident/Concern forms
- All safeguarding forms (disclosure, chronology, front sheet etc.)
- Records of discussions, telephone calls and meetings (with colleagues, other agencies or services, parents and children)
- Professional consultations
- Letters sent and received
- Referral forms (both for external and education-based services).
- Minutes of meetings (copies for each child as appropriate)

Chronology Forms:

The importance of understanding concerns for a child in the context of history, time-lines and other known information cannot be underestimated. Chronologies are central to this process and these are completed on an ongoing basis as the case progresses. In addition to aiding assessment, a chronology will serve as an important record of the setting's actions and when attached to an Inter-Agency Referral form can provide evidence for the referral.

A chronology should list specific and significant incidents, events and actions taken in relation to the child and where appropriate their family, with a brief explanation or cross-reference to the relevant record within the file. A chronology will be stored at the front of a child's safeguarding file alongside the front sheet where it can be quickly accessed and viewed. It will be kept up to date.

Storage of records:

- Safeguarding records are kept separate from all other records relating to that child.
- Safeguarding records are stored in a locked cabinet with access only given to the DSL and Manager of the setting.
- It is essential to ensure that arrangements are in place for access to records in the absence of the DSL. This forms part of the setting's general Safeguarding Policy in respect of how welfare concerns for children will be managed if the DSL is not available.

Sharing information:

All information held by the setting may be shared with Children's Social Services and Police and health professionals as appropriate, where there is a concern that a child is at risk of significant harm.

On occasions where safeguarding concerns exist for a child in the context of a family situation and siblings attend other settings or schools, it may be appropriate for the safeguarding lead to consult on a confidential basis with the EYDP from another setting or school to share and jointly

consider concerns. If there is any doubt about the appropriateness of this process, advice will be sought from the agency lead professional (Area Safeguarding Adviser).

#### Data Protection:

- Records relating to safeguarding children are exempt information under the Education (School Records) Regulation 1989. They can be kept on computer and are exempt from the disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984.
- Neither the parent nor the child has an automatic right of access to safeguarding records, even under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It is however best practice to share information written by setting staff unless there is a valid reason to withhold it.
- If an application is made to see the whole record, advice should be sought from the Area Safeguarding Adviser or Setting Improvement Partner, and the child's social worker if they have one. All third party information will be removed, or consent sought for its disclosure from the original source.
- Cases of alleged abuse that result in court proceedings may require the setting to disclose their records, either through the police or social services. Records (suitably anonymised) may also be requested for use in disciplinary proceedings.
- In all court cases, a requesting solicitor or other third party should be advised that a Witness Summons or Subpoena should be obtained. In these situations the advice of your Area Safeguarding Adviser, SIP and/or legal department will be sought.

#### Transfer of safeguarding records:

- When children transfer from our setting and records of safeguarding/welfare concerns have been kept, these will be sent to the receiving school/setting as soon as possible. These records will be passed directly to the EYDP in the receiving school/setting.
- If the child is a 'Child in need of a Protection Plan' at the time of transfer, the EYDP will liaise directly with the EYDP of the receiving school/setting and arrange for the records to be transferred under confidential cover. If a child leaves the setting and staff are unaware of the name of the child's new education placement, contact will be made with the child's key worker from Specialist Children's Services to discuss how records should be transferred.
- Where records of safeguarding/welfare concerns have been kept, and details of the receiving establishment are not known, the setting's DSL will follow the Missing Children Procedure.

Retention of safeguarding records:

- If any records are retained by the setting, they should be kept until a child's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.